

## News and Notes

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### Why did Muhammad deny the Crucifixion?

**W**HAT explanation is to be given for the clear denial of the crucifixion in the Quran? Is it possible to reconstruct the situation as it existed for Muhammad?

Here are some suggestions:—

It seems almost certain that Muhammad knew how central for Christianity was the belief in the death of Jesus on the cross. Consider the great prominence given to it in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament and in the thought of Christians generally. Muhammad could hardly have been ignorant of all this. He may, indeed, have known that it was a case of "without this, nothing."

Why then did he deny that the crucifixion took place?

1. Assuming that he was absolutely honest about the matter a reason may be found in this, that he was influenced by the *docetic* doctrine of some heretical Christian sect. Thus, according to the *Basiliidians* the individual whom the soldiers mistook for Jesus and crucified was Simon of Cyrenè; according to the gospel of Barnabas, it was Judas Iscariot.

Muhammad, it is possible, out of regard for Jesus, and with a view to clearing His name from the reproach which the Jews intended by so vile a death, welcomed this theory as true to fact. The language of Sura Nisa (IV) 156, does indeed, on the surface, suggest a reference to that early heresy, *viz.*, "One was made to appear to them like" [(*i.e.*, Jesus), Rodwell.]

It is not easy, however, to believe that in this matter Muhammad was chiefly guided by what such Christians said of it, since the Jews generally would admit the part played by their race in bringing about the crucifixion of Jesus.

2. On the other hand, the crucial passage, above cited, occurs in a late Madina sura. Times had by then changed and with the times Muhammad. We have to ask whether it may not have been possible that Muhammad, knowing the real facts, nevertheless *deliberately* denied the death on the cross, using the Basilidian theory as a plausible excuse for his denial.

If that be so, what prompted him to do so? Is it not possible that Muhammad, realising the great importance of this *fact* for Christianity and also its unique value in winning men to Christ's allegiance, aimed a blow at the root of the Christian faith?

3. There remains a further conjecture. The language of the Quran on this subject at different places is admittedly vague and apparently contradictory. c.f. XIX, 34; IV, 156, 157; III, 48; V, 117. It is just possible that this vagueness reflects the confusion in the mind of Muhammad about the actual facts; (e.g., he certainly was at a loss to understand the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as the Quran bears striking witness.) It would not be surprising if he shewed a lack of appreciation of the profound significance of the death of Christ. Did he ever meet a man to whom 'Christ crucified' was the one theme worth talking about? We cannot positively say, but there is evidence that he lent an ear to unworthy and designing persons belonging to 'the people of the Book.'

But the historical evidence for the crucifixion is all against Muhammad and the Quran. Nothing is clearer in the Gospels than this, that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate to placate the Jews. The Jews have never denied it. Roman and Greek historians testify to it, e.g., Tacitus,\* Pliny, Lucian, Celsus.

The grand theme of Paul's writings is the Cross of Christ. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Gal. vi. 14.

And we, too, rejoice in saying;

"In the Cross of Christ I glory  
 Towering o'er the wrecks of time  
 All the light of sacred story  
 Gathers round its head sublime."

### 'There is no Salvation in Islam.'

THE *Nigar* of Lucknow for January, 1931, is said to contain an interesting discussion on the question as to which of the following two persons is *naji* (recipient of salvation) and which *nari* (condemned to perdition). The question was put thus:

One who is born a *Muslim*, is regular at his daily prayers, keeps the prescribed fast, even says the midnight prayer and is given

\* Annals, xv. 44. The passage is quoted in full in *The Fellowship*, for March, 1931, edited by Dr. Stanley Jones, Sitapur, U.P., India.

to holy incantations, but his practical life is one of deceit and duplicity, evil and lies, ill-will towards others and misanthropy.

OR

One, a *Brahmin* who is a born *kafir* and polytheist, wedded heart and soul to the worship of his idols but at the same time his daily life is devoted to the service of his fellow-men, the care of orphans, and sympathy for widows, and who is a blessing to society?

The question was referred to 32 leading Ulama of India. Only 16 took the trouble of giving their verdict in the light of the Quran, as conceived by each. The list of these 16 contains names supposed to be the brightest stars in the religious firmament of Muslim India. Here in brief are some of their opinions as quoted by *the Light* :—

1. The Musalman is *naji* and liable to punishment for his sins. The Brahmin is *nari*, no matter however virtuous a life he may lead, which will all go for naught.

2. Whoever does good will get his reward and whoever does evil will suffer its consequences, whether a Muslim or a non-Muslim. Those whose good deeds outweigh their evil deeds will go to heaven, those whose evil deeds outweigh their good, to hell. But this rests with God to judge.

3. The Muslim is decidedly a *naji*, provided he dies a Muslim, the Brahmin must have hell as his eternal abode if he dies a *kafir*.

4. The Muslim will have salvation, the *kafir*, no matter what a blessing his life may be to his fellow-men, will have no credit for it and must pack to hell.

5. A Muslim however wicked he may be, is assured of salvation. A *kafir* may get the reward of his virtuous life in this worldly life but in the hereafter, he shall have no share.

6. The Muslim will get to heaven. The *kafir* may spend a whole life in doing good, may worship God the whole night, may spend lacs of rupees in charity but these will carry no value unless he shall profess faith in Islam. He will live in God's wrath for ever.

7. Faith is necessary for salvation. There is no salvation for a polytheist. Faith is the key to salvation and the *kafir* does not possess that key. As a man's salvation means at-one-ment with God, it is inconceivable that this object may be obtained without faith in God. As a matter of fact, deeds which are not done out of this motive cannot be called virtue, however virtuous they may look. Such deeds may be due to the desire for popularity or some other motive and may lead to the attainment of that desire—but not to God, the real objective of man, his salvation.

8. Both are *nari*, the wicked Muslim as well as the virtuous Brahmin, for salvation depends on faith plus a virtuous life.

9. It has been a moot point which of the two carries more value, faith shorn of life or life shorn of faith. The consensus of opinion puts the first above the other. Lack of good life makes one liable to a certain measure of punishment but lack of faith incurs eternal torture.

10. A Muslim, however sinful, is not *nari*. Mere profession of Islam wards off hell fire. A *kafir*, no matter even if the whole of his life is spent in good deeds, is doomed to hell fire.

After a lengthy comment on the various opinions expressed above the editor of the *Nigar* gives his own verdict on the question. "A wicked Muslim is decidedly *nari*, because in reality he is a *kafir* and polytheist, whereas a virtuous Brahmin is decidedly *naji* because, in reality, he is a Muslim in the true sense of the word. Not only this, but the whole lot of the Ulama who side with this nominal Muslim (*kafir* in reality) are also the enemies of God and shall have their doom."

*The Light* of Lahore makes the perfectly amazing comment:—

'In the first place the question, as it stands, puts one on the wrong track. There is no such thing in Islam as *najat*, in the sense of salvation. It is a Christian idea imported into Islam, implying that sin is the normal state of this life and the highest of our ambition should be to get rid of that sin. That is a basic mistake which Islam came to rectify. Islam gives *najat* to man at his very birth, to man as such, be he a Muslim or a non-Muslim, believer or *kafir*. All children, according to a saying of the Prophet, are born Muslims. So *najat* is given us as our very start. What is wanted of us, or better still, what we are here for and what religion has come for, is that observing certain rules of conduct in this life we may work out our self-unfoldment to the highest point.'

One rubs one's eyes lest one has misread or misunderstood the editor of *The Light*. But no, that is what he says. We referred it to a first-class Maulavi who has recently been baptized, and he positively chuckled with delight, and seeing more in the repudiation than the editor of *The Light* intended, exclaimed, 'why, of course, it is true, *there is no salvation in Islam*!'

We are tempted to reproduce again a quotation we made, from this same Ahmadiyya paper, in *News and Notes* for September 1927; (p. 74). A correspondent had thus addressed its editor:

'I am a girl of twenty, and from the age of twelve, I have done every sin that you can think of. In fact I have tasted of every leaf of the tree of life. Alas! there is nothing left for me but Hell when I die. I ask you sincerely what am I to do to be saved? I have put this question to a Priest. He has told me to repent, but the truth is I cannot repent, as what I have done I have enjoyed doing, though it was a sin. Now will you advise me what I am to do so as to be saved from Hell?' And to this perishing soul the editor replied: 'Turn a new leaf. Lead a righteous life hence forward. This alone can wash off past sins. This is the only true atonement. Sins are washed off, the Quran assures us, by good deeds and these alone.'

A stone for bread! What a confession of bankruptcy in Islam!

## The Christian Message and Islam.

This month we give a summary of the discussion in Cairo on the subject of "How to present Christianity to *Women*."

1. As a general rule, no difficulty stands in the way of contact with the mass of uneducated or semi-educated women. Mission hospitals and baby-welfare centres open the door to visiting in the homes. By means of magic lantern slides and of pictures, the attention of the women is readily attracted. But great care and tact should be exercised; especially when visiting, to ensure that the visit is being made at a time convenient to the busy mother.

2. In making known our message, many openings present themselves to the wise worker:—

- e.g. (1) Women are always interested in topics connected with the management of the house or with the care of the children
- or (2) We may begin, as Christ often began, by drawing a parable from any household articles we may see in the room
- or (3) We may refer to some sorrow or trouble which has fallen upon the household
- or (4) We may begin by teaching the need of prayer
- or (5) We may tell a simple Bible story, such as that of the Prodigal Son
- or (6) We may read the story of the Annunciation, as given in St. Luke
- or (7) We may speak of Christ as Judge and then as Saviour.

Our approach will vary according to whether we may, or may not, have an opportunity of visiting the family again.

3. We need, however, to bridge over the gap that separates us from them. For this purpose, any form of social service, such as baby-welfare or care of the eyes, is invaluable. Such service at once creates a spirit of mutual sympathy. But there is also an intellectual gap to be bridged. It is a good thing to let Muslim women talk freely to us. In this way, we can begin to understand their beliefs and fears, the language of their mind and tongue. We shall find that we cannot be too simple for them. We may need to repeat our message many times over, in order to make sure that it is understood.

4. It soon becomes clear that our real enemy is not Islam, of which women often know little, but sin and fear. The women have a very inadequate sense of sin, and we must try to shew them what sin really means. On the other hand, their lives are surrounded by innumerable fears, fears of demon-possession, of the evil eye, of magic and so on.

5. Many women converts were won, in the first instance, through seeing the lives of individual missionaries. It is a good thing to enable Muslim women to live in a Christian environment, whenever possible. To many inquirers God has revealed Himself in a vision, especially when the woman was confronted by some special problem or difficulty.

6. Our main difficulty is not to persuade women to listen, but to lead them on to acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Sometimes, perhaps, the reason for their hesitation is fear of loss and persecution. But, sometimes, too, the cause is lack of faith and believing prayer and real love and enthusiasm on our part. We must look on these women as Christ looked on the men and women around Him. We must know our Bibles and our message and how to pray, and speak to them believingly.

7. Women of the educated classes are only partially reached at present. Day schools, Sunday schools and above all Boarding schools bring us in touch with some girls of the upper classes, but more needs to be done for them. More literature for women should be written, e.g., pamphlets on heroines of the Bible, and a booklet on the life of our Lord in relation to women. A booklet shewing the difference between the status of woman in Islam and in Christianity, would be useful. Would it be possible to arrange special group meetings for women of the upper classes? or to organize university extension lectures for them?

### The Language of Muslim Prayer.

WE desire to help Muslim inquirers and converts from Islam in their prayer-life, but we need to be more intimately acquainted with their private life before we can do this. In particular, we require to know the *vocabulary* concerning prayer in common use among them.

The Central Literature Bureau at Cairo is seeking to glean information on this vital subject and we, through *News and Notes*, would like to assist.

This can best be done, as far as India is concerned, by those of our readers who are already interested in the subject working along the lines suggested by the list of questions appended, which has reached us from Cairo. But it is essential that our findings be related to the present-day practice of Muslims.

We shall be glad to receive information from members in India and then forward a statement to Cairo.

(N.B.—In answering these questions please bear in mind a possible distinction between the technical and specialist use of words by any of your friends who are members of dervish orders, and the use of words by the Muslim public outside the orders.)

1. What words does a Muslim man or woman use in describing prayer? Please note any observations you have made as to special nuances in their meaning.
  - (a) The set prayers of Islam. Are there any distinctive words for silent worship in general, and spoken prayer?
  - (b) Petition in general—a single request.
  - (c) Intercession (are the same words used of the intercession of the prophets and of a mother's intercession for her son?)
  - (d) Meditation or communion with God, rapture and mystical union.
  - (e) Praise, adoration.
  - (f) Thanksgiving.

- (g) Are there any special phrases to denote exceptionally earnest or desperate prayer—"wrestling with God," "giving Him no rest," "beseeching with tears," "pouring out the soul," etc.
- (h) Do you know any proverbs or popular sayings that touch on prayer or praise?
- In what words have you found Muslims *making their address* to God? What *Names of God* have you found actually used in prayer and adoration? Please make any comments on this use. Do you find prayers addressed to prophets or saints, and if so, in what terms?
  - What ejaculatory prayer-phrases have you found in use? (Such as 'Ya Satir' or 'Astaghfir Allah' or 'Al hamdu lillah'.) These, though often used needlessly, are revealing of men's common thoughts of God. Please say on what occasions each is used.
  - What can you find out about prayers taught to children? At what age do children actually (not theoretically) learn the *namas* and join in prayer. What other prayers, if any, do they learn? (e.g., a convert in Egypt was taught in childhood by his mother to make a little imprecatory prayer every time a Christian passed.) Do mothers pray for their babies, if so, how? What are the main teachings about prayer that a Muslim child has received in school before the age of twelve years? (If desirable, send extracts from text-books in use in elementary schools.)  
Please distinguish between boys and girls in this study.
  - What prayer words and customs can you discover for times of sickness? And at the time of death and mourning?
  - Do Muslims with you make prayers with vows in them? Can you give examples of the words used and vows made, and the circumstances and places of such vows? What are such vow-prayers called?
  - Can you collect examples of prayers in use only at special times and places (other than the set prayers of Islam)?  
e.g., setting out on a journey or returning safely,  
setting up a loom,  
asking blessing on seed or crops,  
special prayers at visitation of certain tombs, shrines, etc.  
passing a haunted place at night, etc.
  - What phrases of penitence and prayers for forgiveness are in use? How does the sinner describe himself? How does he describe sin? How does he ask for pardon? What words are in common use for repentance, penitence, atonement, forgiveness and cognate themes?
  - What words do you find used for the Divine *answer* to prayer? Can you give examples of living Muslim experience of this?
  - What phrases are in use concerning the preparation for prayer, outward and inward? What are the common thoughts and common phrases about man's *intention* in prayer?  
What thoughts and phrases are in use about prayer that is invalid or inefficacious because of unfulfilled conditions, outward or inward?
  - Have you any comments to make on the proportion of prayer life given by your Muslim friends to praise and adoration as against petition?
  - Please make any notes about the books or papers of prayers and devotions that you have found on sale, and of which you are sending specimens. Tell as far as possible by what types of persons each is

used and whence the books come, and which are the most sold. Please distinguish carefully between manuals that are only used by members of certain dervish orders and other books that are bought by pious folk outside the orders.

### Does any one Know?

**A** LITTLE tract of 8 pages in Urdu, called *Haqaiq-i-Quran* (Truths from the Quran) appeared first in 1918. A translation of it was published in *News and Notes*, July, 1918. It comprises 14 reasons from the Quran showing the superiority of Christ over Muhammad. It fell "as a bomb in the Muslim camp." It was, so stated Dr. E. M. Wherry of Ludhiana at the time, written by a Mulla, a sincere believer in Christ. Can any one tell us more about this Mulla—his name and subsequent history?

The little tract has had a great vogue, in spite of replies denouncing it, and is now in its 6th ed. with a total of 10,000 copies. It is stocked by the Punjab Religious Tract Society, Anarkali, Lahore.

### FOR PRAYER AND PRAISE.

- PRAY** for an earnest *maulvi*, a confessed believer, that he may come to know both the joy and power of the new life in Christ.
- PRAISE** for the agreement reached in India whereby the road is now open for a settlement based on peace and good-will.
- PRAISE** for opportunities to preach the Gospel, not without opposition, to large audiences in Lahore City. Pray that the spoken message may prove to be for many the Living Word, bringing conviction and leading to conversion.

### NEW MEMBER.

Miss M. H. Green, Wesleyan Mission, Akbarpur,  
Dt. Fyzabad.

Any notification of change of address, names of new members or remittance of subscription, etc., should be sent to the Superintendent, Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, India, and *not* to the Secretary of the League. The annual subscription to the League is Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. od.).

Matters of interest to members of the League, items of news and requests for prayer should be sent (if possible, early in the month) to the Hony. Secretary:—

Rev. L. Bevan Jones,  
5, Egerton Road,  
Lahore,  
Punjab, India.

